

Spring  
2005



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# State Senator Liz Brater

## The Lansing Report

### Pollution Prevention Legislation Signed into Law

**I**n 2004, the Governor signed into law Senate Bill 722 (PA 333), extending the Pollution Prevention Loan Program. The program provides low-interest loans to small businesses for pollution prevention projects. The new law increases both the number of small businesses eligible for the program as well as the maximum loan amounts available. I was proud to sponsor this legislation.

Programs funded by the Pollution Prevention Loan Program can

include equipment or technology modifications, process or procedure modifications, redesign of products and substitution of raw materials, improvement in housekeeping, maintenance, training or inventory control, and certain energy-efficiency improvements.

To date, some 21 projects have been funded by \$600,000 in loans. Examples include an upgrading of dry cleaning equipment that is expected to reduce hazardous cleaning solvent

usage by 50 percent, a printing company's purchase of a computer-to-plate imaging system that eliminated use of 280 gallons of chemicals, and a radiator shop's purchase of a closed-loop water recycling system that reduced the amount of lead, zinc and silt-laden liquid waste by 480 gallons.



*Senator Brater and Governor Granholm at bill signing.*

# Budget Update

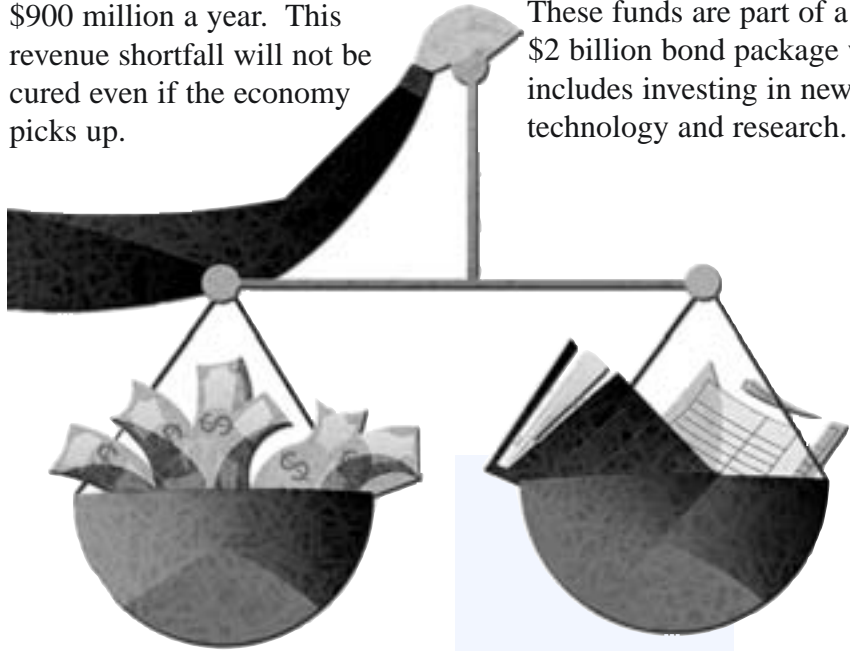
## Single Business Tax Generates Dialogue

Governor Granholm's plan to restructure the Single Business Tax (SBT) is generating much discussion. In addition to a 37 percent cut in the SBT rate, the plan offers a new personal property tax credit to help Michigan manufacturers, a research and development tax credit to help high-tech businesses, and a revised tax formula that encourages employers to create jobs in Michigan. The governor's plan also eliminates special tax treatment for Michigan-based insurance companies. The plan will lower taxes for more than 70,000 Michigan businesses and level the playing field within the state's business community. The revenue-neutral package has received support from many business and labor groups and, if approved, would take effect on or after January 1, 2006.

## Ongoing Budget Woes

Governor Granholm and the legislature continue to face tough choices in reaching a balanced budget. The State of Michigan continues to face a severe financial crisis. During the 12 years of the previous administration, taxes were cut more than 30 times, including reducing the income tax from 4.4 to 3.9 percent. This cut alone is costing the state about \$900 million a year. This revenue shortfall will not be cured even if the economy picks up.

Next year's (2005-06) budget is not yet approved. The current shortfall is \$700 million. I remain committed to working to protect a strong social services safety net, public education, children's services, affordable health care, and a clean environment. Governor Granholm has made a number of proposals to stimulate the state's economy, including funds for environmental cleanup. These funds are part of a \$2 billion bond package which includes investing in new technology and research.



## Town Hall Meeting Focuses on Social Security

*U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, Congressman John Dingell, and State Senator Liz Brater at a Social Security Town Hall meeting on the President's plan to privatize Social Security.*



# Brater Reintroduces Solid Waste Surcharge Legislation

**M**ichigan is the third largest importer of solid waste in the nation. Earlier this year I introduced legislation to create a \$6 per ton surcharge for waste disposal in Michigan landfills. The surcharge would raise about \$100 million per year, which would be returned to municipalities to encourage recycling programs and fund other environmental and local needs. This fee would bring Michigan in line with landfill costs in other states and make Michigan landfills less of a magnet to out-of-state waste, while encouraging recycling.

Currently, 32 percent of the municipal waste in Michigan

landfills comes from outside of Michigan. Recent studies estimate that solid waste imports – primarily from Canada – increased by 2.5 million cubic yards between 2003 and 2004, enough to bury a football field 1,000 feet deep. Meanwhile, Michigan has the lowest recycling rate in the Great Lakes region, recycling only 20 percent of its waste.



The legislation would send 90 percent of the revenues from the surcharge back to cities, villages, and townships for recycling, environmental, and other local public health and safety programs. The remaining fees would help counties to develop countywide solid waste plans, fund DEQ landfill inspections, and cover administrative costs. Twenty-three other states have established similar funds.

# Water Legacy Bill Regulates Water Withdrawals, Protects Water Resources

**I**n January 2005, I reintroduced legislation to regulate water withdrawals from the Great Lakes. Rep. Chris Kolb (D-Ann Arbor) has introduced identical legislation in the House. This proposed legislation would set in law the Governor's Michigan Water Legacy Act, part of a comprehensive initiative to protect Michigan's six quadrillion gallons of fresh water. As water becomes more scarce, other states and even other countries are eyeing this

precious resource. We need to make every effort to protect and conserve it.

The bill would regulate the withdrawal of water from the Great Lakes, their tributaries, and connecting aquifers. Large water withdrawals would require state permits. New facilities drawing more than two million gallons of water a day in a month or 100 million gallons a day in a year would be required to obtain

permits. (By 2010, new users of 100,000 gallons a day would need a permit.) Current water users would not be affected unless they sought to increase water withdrawals or use additional water sources.

Senate Democrats are hosting a series of Town Hall meetings around the state to share information about the Governor's Water Legacy Act and to allow the public to express their views. The first of these meetings was held in Washtenaw County on May 18, with many citizens expressing support for the bills.

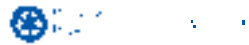




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## Strengthening of Voting Rights

**I**n past elections voters have encountered long lines at many polling sites. We must seek ways to reduce delays and eliminate barriers while encouraging more voters to participate in the democratic process.

Currently, only those 60 and older, out of their community on election day, having religious reasons for not voting on election day, needing assistance at the polls, or incarcerated are eligible to vote absentee.

These rules disenfranchise people who can't get to the polls for a variety of other reasons. Many would-be voters lack transportation. Some have small children at home with no access to child care. Some work long hours that prevent them from

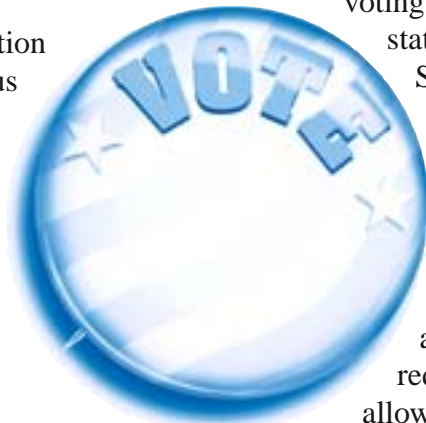
getting to the polls. And others can't manage long waits in lines at polling sites.

We need to make it easier for people to vote. I have introduced four bills to improve voter access and encourage voter turnout.

Senate Bill (SB) 5 would allow voting by mail in local and statewide elections.

SB 6 would allow Michigan citizens who register on the same day of an election to also vote in that election, assuming they meet age and residency requirements. SB 144

allows citizens to vote where they live, for example, at their college campus. Finally, SB 145 would eliminate current restrictions for voting absentee and allow no-reason absentee voting. These reforms will improve access and assure that all citizens can exercise their voting rights.



## Attention New Voters

**Register in person if you need to vote by mail!**

If you need to vote by absentee ballot the first time you vote, you must register in person at your city or township clerk's office or a Secretary of State's office. Only those who have registered in person can vote by absentee ballot the first time they vote. This is of special importance to college students away from home during an election.

## Want to Know More?



Mailing funds are limited and I would like to keep in touch with you. Please take a minute to e-mail

me your e-mail address so I can send you legislative updates. If you don't have e-mail, please call my toll-free number to receive updates by mail. Thank you!